Ethical Leadership in Higher Education

Navigating Values, Responsibility, and Technology in a Changing Academic Landscape

by

W. James Jacob, Gustavo Gregorutti, and Christopher H. Goslin

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Preface

This book began with a scene that each of us has lived in one form or another: a warm room, a closing door, a decision that cannot wait, and a rulebook that has suddenly gone quiet. A donor attaches a condition to a transformative gift. A legislator hints that funding depends on silencing a professor. An algorithm flags a frightened sophomore for misconduct she did not commit. A budget shortfall arrives midyear with no painless option on the table. In each case, the people around the table are capable and well-intentioned, and the policies that normally guide them are silent, incomplete, or point in several directions at once. What remains, in that moment, is the leader, their character, their habits of reasoning, and the trust they have either built or squandered in the years before the meeting was ever scheduled.

Our premise throughout this volume is that ethical leadership in higher education is a practice, not a trait. It is not a quality some administrators are born with, and others permanently lack. It is learned, rehearsed, and strengthened across a career, and it becomes visible precisely when the pressure is real, and the clock is running. That conviction shapes both the substance and the form of this book. Every chapter opens with a vignette we call "A Moment in the Room," a compressed dilemma drawn from the daily life of colleges and universities, and every chapter returns to that scene at its close. We wrote the book this way because ethics in higher education is not an abstraction to be admired from a distance. It is exercised, or abandoned, one decision at a time.

Several themes run through the chapters ahead. The first is that institutional legitimacy is earned through daily decisions, not conferred by a charter or an accreditor. Trust cannot be announced; it

must be demonstrated, repeatedly, by keeping actions aligned with stated values. The second is a chain of cause and effect on which the entire book rests. Personal character shapes individual decisions, and those decisions shape organizational culture, practice, and legitimacy. A dean who tells the truth in difficult meetings teaches the faculty that candor is safe; a president who quietly bends the rules teaches the opposite lesson just as quickly. The third theme is the distinction between compliance and ethics. Compliance sets the floor; ethics defines the ceiling. Following the rules is necessary but never sufficient, and the most consequential ethical moments arise exactly where the rulebook is silent. The fourth is that ethical leadership operates on two levels at once. Individual virtue matters, and so do the structures, incentives, and governance arrangements that make good behavior easier and misconduct harder. A virtuous leader in a broken system can be defeated by it; a flawed leader in a well-designed one can be restrained by it.

These themes take on particular urgency amid trends reshaping higher education. Public confidence in colleges and universities has grown fragile even as expectations of them have risen. Tuition costs and student debt have outpaced what families can bear, and governments ask institutions to do more with less while demonstrating their worth with data. Political pressure on academic freedom has intensified in ways not seen in generations. Enrollment patterns are shifting, budgets are strained, and artificial intelligence has moved from the horizon into advising offices, classrooms, and integrity hearings faster than most policies, or most leaders' fluency, can keep up. Each of these pressures looks financial or technological on the surface, yet beneath each one lies a question about trust: Is the institution worth the cost? Does it keep its commitments? Does it treat its people fairly? These are ethical questions, and the public is now asking them directly.

The volume is organized into three parts, framed by an Introduction and a Conclusion. The Introduction defines ethical leadership, introduces the book's key vocabulary, and presents the Ethical Leadership Compass. It places the leadership scenario at its center and surrounds it with the core values and essential characteristics that every hard decision tests. Part I, Theoretical Foundations, equips leaders with virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism, the moral frameworks that make ethical reasoning rigorous rather than improvised. It then connects those frameworks to major leadership theories and applies them to academic freedom, autonomy, and responsibility. Part II, Ethical Leadership in Practice, moves to the arenas where trust is won or lost. These include student success, access and belonging, governance and shared decision-making, financial stewardship, and technology. Part III, Future Directions, asks how ethical leadership is sustained over time through preparing the next generation of leaders, cultivating organizational cultures of trust, and reclaiming higher education's role as a moral force in society. The Conclusion gathers these threads into the COMPASS Check, a practical decision-making protocol that leaders can carry into the warm rooms of their own careers. Its seven steps are Clarify, Orient, Map, Picture, Ask, State, and Stand.

We wrote this book for a broad community. It includes sitting presidents, provosts, deans, and vice presidents; department chairs and directors stepping into leadership for the first time; trustees and board members who share responsibility for institutional integrity; and the graduate students and emerging scholars who will lead the academy next. We do not promise correct answers, because the dilemmas that matter most rarely have one. Instead, we offer a way of seeing, a vocabulary for reasoning, and tools for acting in a way a leader can stand behind and justify in public. Higher education has earned its place in society through centuries of service to truth, to

students, and to the common good. Whether it keeps that place will be decided not by mission statements but by thousands of daily decisions made by people like the ones who open every chapter of this book. Our hope is that this volume helps people make those decisions with confidence, professionalism, and composure. That is the pathway toward becoming the ethical and transformational leaders their institutions need.

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Introduction
Defining Ethical Leadership in Higher Education

A Moment in the Room

A vice president for advancement sits across from a major donor. The gift on the table would fund a new building and change the institution's trajectory. There is one condition. The donor wants to choose who directs the new center, and the preferred candidate has a thin record but holds agreeable views. The room is warm. The president expects a recommendation by the end of the week. What should the vice president do?

The difficulty in this situation is clear. The correct answer is not hidden. When the question is asked in general terms, most leaders can state the principle without hesitation, namely that institutional integrity is not for sale. What makes it difficult is putting that principle into practice in an actual situation, under real pressure, with real implications for the budget, the colleagues involved, and the students who will never even know the conversation occurred. In moments like these, ethical leadership is demonstrated. Values come into conflict, time runs short, and the leader's decision shows what the institution truly stands for.

This book helps higher education leaders to identify, interpret, and respond to those moments. It is also about the quieter ones that precede them, the habits, frameworks, and relationships a leader builds long before the high-stakes meeting, so that when the warm room arrives, the response is already partly formed. Our premise is simple. Ethical leadership in higher education is not a fixed trait some

people are born with, and others lack. It is a practice. Leaders can learn, rehearse, and strengthen it over the course of a career.

Why Ethical Leadership Matters Now

Higher education is being scrutinized more closely than at any point in living memory. Public expectations are high even as confidence in institutions has become increasingly fragile. The cost of tuition has increased faster than families can afford, student debt has reached levels that follow graduates for decades, and employers report a persistent gap between what degrees promise and what graduates can do (Sutin and Jacob 2016). Governments that once underwrote public colleges now ask them to do more with less and to prove it with data.

On the surface, each of these pressures seems like a financial or operational issue, but underneath each one lies a question about trust. Is the institution worth the cost? Does it keep its commitments? Does it treat its students, faculty, and staff fairly and with care? These are essentially ethical questions, and the public is now asking them directly. This erosion of confidence is not confined to the campus. George R. Boggs (2026), President and CEO Emeritus of the American Association of Community Colleges, observes that conduct once regarded as disqualifying in public leaders, such as dishonesty, self-enrichment, and divisiveness, has become normalized, and he urges leaders in every sector to help the nation reclaim its moral compass. Higher education, which prepares each rising generation of leaders, has a particular stake in answering that call.

One of the book's main points is that institutional legitimacy and ethical behavior cannot be separated. Legitimacy is not permanently granted through a charter or by an accrediting body; instead, leaders must earn it and continually re-earn it through daily decisions. Examples include how they handle a budget shortfall, whether they

tell people a hard truth, and how they manage a controversy. If their decisions align with stated values, trust grows over time; if they are inconsistent with those values, trust fades and cannot be restored, even by a vigorous marketing campaign. As experienced administrators note, reputation takes years to build up and can be lost in just one afternoon.

This chapter provides the foundation for the rest of the book. It gives working definitions of ethical leadership, introduces the main terms and frameworks the book is based on, looks at trends changing the way people work, and sets out the central questions the subsequent chapters examine. The overall objective is practical in that it does not encourage admiring ethics from a distance but prepares leaders to act ethically at all times, especially when it matters.

Defining Ethical Leadership in Higher Education

Let's start with a working definition.

Ethical leadership in higher education consists of guiding the institution and its members toward a shared vision and set of objectives in a way that aligns with sound values, is honest about consequences, and is accountable to the public good.

Each phrase matters because it shows that leadership is about relationships, not just holding a position. *Aligning with sound values* means decisions are based on moral principles rather than convenience. *Stating the consequences* honestly makes it clear that good intentions are not enough and that results matter. Keeping *account of the public good* reminds us that universities and colleges exist to serve the public good, not merely themselves. This definition sits within a broader field. Joanne B. Ciulla (1995, 2014) argues that ethics lies at the heart of leadership itself rather than as an optional addition, because

every account of leadership carries assumptions about what leaders owe the people they lead. The definition offered here is an attempt to make those assumptions explicit.

What is the source of such leadership? Stewart E. Sutin and W. James Jacob (2016) maintained that strategic leadership is based on a number of personal characteristics and core values built over a lifetime. These values, to use Stephen R. Covey's (1989) expression, act as a moral compass guiding leaders in all their actions. Leaders almost never create these values in a crisis; rather, they acquire and develop them, often copying the behavior of mentors and role models they meet at various points in life. The provost who refuses the donor's condition is generally relying on a character that was shaped well before the meeting took place. Nannerl O. Keohane (2006), writing from her experience as president of Wellesley College and Duke University, makes the same point from the inside, treating ethical leadership in the university as a matter of judgment exercised in particular situations by a particular person rather than a set of rules that any office holder could apply.

The entire book rests on one chain of reasoning. Personal character shapes individual decisions, and those decisions shape organizational culture, practice, and legitimacy. A leader's integrity is not just a personal virtue kept to themselves. It has an effect beyond themselves. If a dean always tells the truth in tough meetings, faculty come to see that openness is safe and respond in the same way. Conversely, if a president quietly fails to adhere to the rules, the message travels just as quickly in the opposite direction. In this way, culture is the accumulated result of a leader's choices.

One point helps avoid a common misunderstanding. Ethical leadership is not the same as compliance. While adhering to the rules is necessary, it is by no means enough. Although policies and regula-

tions set out the essential boundaries and provide a foundational structure for an organization, ethical leadership refers to the standard that a leader aims to achieve. Even when a decision is fully legal, it may still be unwise, unfair, or damaging to trust. The most consequential ethical moments often arise where the rulebook is silent, incomplete, or allows for several competing choices, highlighting the essential nature of sound judgment.

Key Terms and Conceptual Frameworks

Several terms are used throughout this book, so it is useful to define them at the beginning.

Ethics, Integrity, and Accountability

Ethics (ˈe-thiks) *noun*

The principles, philosophies, and knowledge based on moral values, together with the careful consideration of how we should act and treat both ourselves and others, whether in public or in private.

Integrity (in-ˈte-grə-tē) *noun*

A firm dedication to moral values, beliefs, and actions in both the public and private areas; a match between these commitments and one's actual behavior, meaning that one treats people the same whether in the boardroom or in the hallway.

Accountability (ə-ˌkau̇n-tə-ˈbi-lə-tē) *noun*

The desire, willingness, and ability to hold oneself and/or other people responsible for the decisions, intentions, and actions one

takes, together with the acceptance of the appropriate consequences.

Although they are conceptually different, they support one another in practice. Ethics without integrity amounts to hypocrisy, and integrity without accountability is not transparent and is usually unprovable. Together, all three make up the core of trustworthy and ethical leadership.

Moral Agency and Leadership Identity

Moral agency is the capacity and the responsibility to make choices. Leaders are not merely conduits for policy. They exercise judgment, and that judgment is theirs to own. Over time, a leader's choices coalesce into a **leadership identity**, a recognizable way of showing up that colleagues come to rely on. Sutin and Jacob (2016) observed that the most effective leaders are genuine and draw on their own personality strengths rather than performing a borrowed role. People can tell the difference, and they extend trust accordingly.

Public Good, Trust, and Institutional Mission

At its core, higher education is a **public good** because it promotes social mobility, fosters knowledgeable citizenship, and contributes to the advancement of knowledge. **Trust** is the belief that leaders will act in good faith, ethically, and with sound character and judgment. It is earned, grows over time, and enables an institution to build a reputation for the public good. Without it, every initiative encounters resistance. The **institutional mission** serves as the standard and the official public declaration that keeps decisions coherent and aligned with the vision, strategy, and purpose. A leader can give a difficult decision legitimacy, even among those it disappoints, if they can link it to the institutional mission using language people understand.

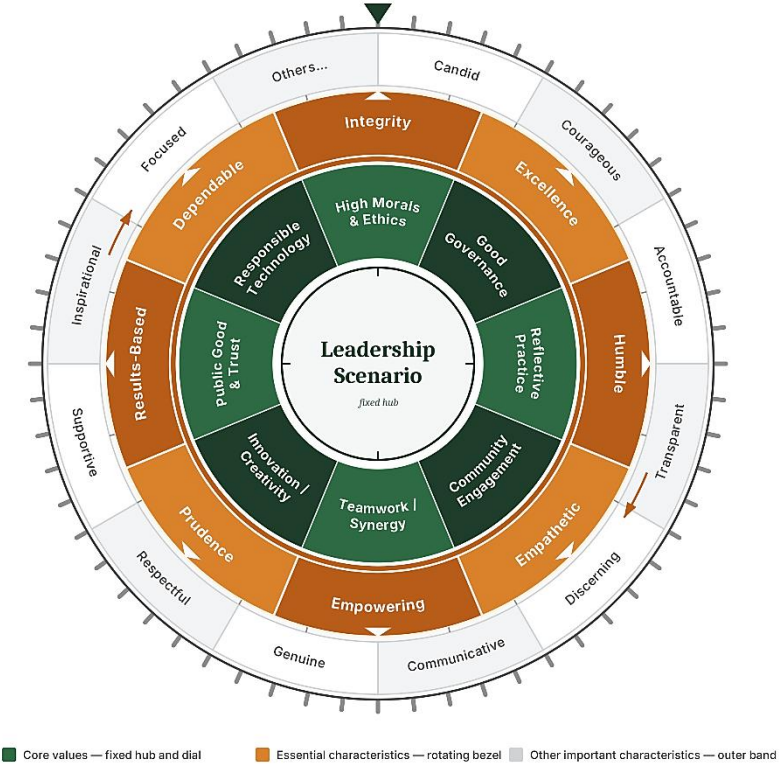
The Ethical Leadership Compass

Reducing ethics to mere personal heroism would be a mistake; a virtuous leader in a flawed system can be overpowered by it, whereas a flawed leader in a well-structured system can be contained by effective safeguards. Although exceptions exist, this pattern generally holds in higher education. Ethical leadership thus functions on two levels. The first is the individual actions of the person in charge. The second is the organizational conditions, such as governance structures, incentives, and reporting channels, that make it easier to act properly and harder to engage in misconduct.

Sutin and Jacob (2016) expressed this dual focus in their Higher Education Leadership Wheel, which put the core leadership values at the center and surrounded them with the characteristics of effective leaders. Figure I-1 modifies and extends that wheel for this book, presenting it as the Ethical Leadership Compass.

The eight core leadership values make up the inner ring, surrounded by eight key leadership characteristics and an additional band of other important characteristics. The values now include *public good and tru*st, and *responsible technology*, two additions that reflect the subject matter of this book. At the very center of the compass is the leadership scenario itself. The values explain the reason for ethical behavior, the characteristics describe how it should be carried out, and the central scenario is where both are assessed by judgment. The following sections will define each part of the compass in turn.

Figure I-1. The Ethical Leadership Compass: Core Values and Essential Characteristics for Higher Education Leaders



Source: Adapted by the authors from Stewart E. Sutin and W. James Jacob (2016, p. 5).

The Eight Core Leadership Values

The inner ring of the compass contains the criteria that explain *why* a leader acts. Six of these are taken from Sutin and Jacob (2016), and two more, public good and trust, and responsible technology, are added because the terrain outlined in this book requires them.

High Morals and Ethics. People with a firm commitment to acting in accordance with principle will continue to do so regardless of whether anyone is observing them. Leaders with high morals and ethics will choose the higher course in the way they make decisions, in the way they teach, in their scholarly work, and in all other areas of their activities. Knowing they hold power, they act as positive role models for tolerance, principles, and the promotion of peace. One example is when a vice president refuses a substantial gift because the conditions attached to it would compromise academic judgment, even though such a refusal involves a real cost.

Good governance means decision-making structures that are transparent, participatory, and accountable. It is shared authority carried out in the open. The four principles of good governance are coordination, information flow, transparency, and accountability. When a provost publishes the budget assumptions that justify a 5 percent reduction rather than simply imposing the cuts without explanation, he or she is acting in accordance with the principles of good governance under pressure.

Reflective Practice. The discipline of examining one's decisions, behaviors, methods, and processes. It involves several steps for ongoing reflection on how to improve. Key elements of reflective practice include benchmarking to identify best practices and learn from others, good governance principles, quality assurance, force field analysis, effective and appropriate monitoring and

evaluation, and a results-based approach to leadership. Reflection often requires input and feedback from key stakeholders. An after-action review following a campus crisis, conducted honestly and openly rather than defensively, turns a difficult episode into institutional learning.

Community Engagement. We consider the fundamental value of effective community engagement in higher education to be mutually beneficial, sustainable networking, partnering, communicating, and organizing activities between higher education institutions and communities at local, national, regional, and international levels. Instead of viewing the communities that an institution serves as simple audiences, it is necessary to regard them as partners in the institution's activities. Examples of this value include standing advisory councils, community-based research, and genuine consultation before a campus expands into a neighborhood.

The idea of **teamwork** or **synergy** is that the most lasting results come from collaboration across units and roles, rather than relying on heroic individual efforts. The example of an enrollment task force that brings together people from admissions, financial aid, advising, and the faculty illustrates this.

Innovation / Creativity. A willingness to experiment in order to further the mission, for example by trying out new course models, technologies, credentials, or partnerships. That willingness goes hand in hand with the integrity to assess the results and discontinue any initiatives that fail to work. Shortcomings, obstacles, and challenges are often essential components of the trial-and-error process of innovation.

Public Good and Trust. Higher education is meant to serve individuals and society by promoting social mobility, fostering

knowledgeable citizenship, and advancing knowledge. Trust is the medium that enables this service. When unflattering outcome data is published openly rather than being hidden, that is making a deposit in that trust account.

Responsible technology means committing to using technological tools, particularly artificial intelligence, thoughtfully rather than simply adopting them; this involves considering what a system is meant to optimize, who is responsible when errors occur, and who is held accountable for how it is used. It also stresses the ethical integration of technology through advocacy, transparency, and cybersecurity that complies with local, national, and international laws. The dean who requires a bias audit before putting a predictive analytics tool into practice is demonstrating this principle.

The Eight Essential Leadership Characteristics

The band surrounding the Eight Core Leadership Values outlines the characteristics that define how a leader acts. These are not traits some people are born with, and others lack; they are dispositions developed throughout a career, usually patterned after mentors and role models, and they become visible precisely when the room is warm, and the clock is running.

Integrity. Alignment between stated values and actual behavior, in the boardroom and the hallway alike. The criterion for it is consistency. A dean who gives the same account of a decision in every place can be trusted in all of them.

Excellence. Holding oneself and the institution to high standards of quality in all areas of teaching, research, administration, and community engagement, while not allowing short-term convenience to lower those standards.

Humble. The capacity to recognize one's limitations, to give credit to others where it's due, and to alter one's views when the evidence so requires. A humble leader is teachable, continually willing to learn, listen, and improve. A president who begins a controversial meeting with "here is what I may be getting wrong" is setting an example.

Being **empathetic** means developing the habit of considering how a decision will affect the various groups it involves, such as students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders, before the decision is taken, not afterwards. A leader who is empathetic makes an effort to see things from other people's perspectives so that kindness, understanding, and care can be maintained in their relationships.

Empowering. Delegating both authority and responsibility and helping others to develop their judgment rather than keeping all the decisions to yourself. Leaders who empower are, according to Sutin and Jacob (2016), multipliers of institutional capacity.

Prudence involves practical common sense regarding timing, the appropriate amount, and the consequences. It means knowing which battles to enter, in what sequence, and at what expense. It is prudence that tells the difference between a courageous action and a reckless one. A prudent leader takes time to consider a decision more than once, examining the situation from several points of view.

Results-Based. Good intentions alone are not sufficient, and outcomes must be honestly measured. Results-based leaders are desirable not primarily because they are aware of the challenges and opportunities, but because they take the initiative to overcome them. A results-based leader asks what changed for the key stakeholders in each initiative and accepts that answer.

Dependable. Fulfilling one's commitments when one makes them, so that colleagues can rely on what a leader has said. The trust that results from being dependable accumulates over time and grows at a compounding rate, being essentially the ongoing maintenance and buildup of trust.

Other Important Leadership Characteristics

The outer part of the compass has features which, although not always essential in all situations, are often decisive in specific instances. **Candid** leaders state difficult truths without softening them; **courageous** leaders act on those truths even when it involves personal risk. **Accountable** leaders take responsibility for their decisions and accept the consequences, while **transparent** ones share their assumptions, trade-offs, and rationale rather than simply declaring their conclusions.

Discerning leaders are able to tell the difference between important matters and trivial ones, as well as between what is urgent and what is merely noisy. **Communicative** leaders make sure people learn about decisions that affect them directly, in a timely way and in terms they understand. **Genuine** leaders use their own personality and strengths rather than adopting a borrowed role. People can tell the difference, and they place greater trust in leaders who are genuine (Sutin and Jacob 2016). **Respectful** and **supportive** leaders treat colleagues as partners and do not diminish their dignity because of their usefulness. **Inspirational** leaders connect everyday work to purposes that are worth caring about, such as the organization's vision, mission, and core values. **Focused** leaders protect the organization's attention by turning down good opportunities that would leave it vulnerable and overburdened, especially when resources are limited.

This outer band is deliberately open-ended. The compass marks its final wedge with an ellipsis ("Others…") for a reason. No fixed list can anticipate every scenario a leader will face. A financial exigency may call for greater analytical rigor; a campus tragedy, mental health and spiritual leaders; a legislative hearing, political acumen; an accreditation review, meticulous patience. Leaders should expect to add characteristics from other domains as circumstances require and to find that different seasons of a career call different strengths to the fore.

The Center of the Compass: Leadership Scenario(s)

In the middle of the compass, there is neither a value nor a characteristic, but a blank space labeled *Leadership Scenario(s)*. This placement is important. The compass is not a picture of an ideal leader to be admired; it is a practical framework for facing real decisions. When a scenario arrives, such as the donor's conditional gift, the vendor's deadline, or the mid-year shortfall, the leader puts it at the center and looks outward. Which core values does this situation bring into play, and what does it require? Which characteristics will this decision call for and which will it put to the test? What would an honest, sensible, and accountable form of this choice look like? Could I explain it afterwards to the people it affects?

When used in this way, the compass provides guide rails and signposts for the decision-making process. It also serves what might be termed the leadership journey, the extended period of behavior between decisions during which character is genuinely formed. It does not provide ready-made answers; the situations described in this book do not lend themselves to formulaic solutions, and the compass should not replace sound judgment. Rather, it offers a structured way to stay oriented under pressure, so that when the warm room arrives, the response is based on values the leader can identify and on

characteristics the leader has previously practiced. Readers are advised to work through each "Moment in the Room" in the chapters that follow using the compass, and they are encouraged to put their own scenarios at the heart of it.

Current Trends Shaping Ethical Leadership

The terrain on which higher education leaders practice is shifting fast. Four currents deserve particular attention.

First, expectations for transparency have risen sharply. Stakeholders no longer accept "trust us" as an answer. Faculty want to see the budget assumptions; students want to know how decisions that affect them were made; boards want documented rationales. Transparency is increasingly a condition of institutional trust, though transparency without context, explanation, or meaningful participation can itself become performative.

Second, technological disruption, especially artificial intelligence, has created decision environments that did not exist a few years ago. Consider a familiar new dilemma.

A Moment in the Room
A dean is given a predictive analytics tool that identifies students who are "at risk" of failing, enabling advisors to act early on. The pilot results are encouraging. However, the model is based on factors such as zip code and first-generation status, which may lead some students to be given lower expectations. The vendor would ideally like a decision made by the end of the month.
Take the tool, reject it, or alter it? And on what basis?

The technology has not eliminated the ethical issue; it has made it more acute. Whether it widens access or reinforces bias, whether it protects students or monitors them, whether it lightens a leader's workload or lets a difficult decision be passed off through an

algorithm, the leader who views such tools as neutral is giving up the judgment essential to the role.

Third, challenges to the institution's legitimacy have increased. The university's fundamental aim, including its mission, value, and independence, is now openly questioned, extending into funding, governance, and the classroom. As a result, leaders must defend not only how they operate but also why the institution exists.

Legitimacy is most severely tested when resources are scarce. Many leaders will recognize a second situation.

A Moment in the Room
The university is experiencing a shortfall midyear and must reduce each department by about 5 percent. The provost can carry out the cuts without delay and in secret, avoiding weeks of worried discussion, or he can make the situation known to the deans, invite criticism, and accept the difficulties that result.
What is the path that safeguards the institution and what is the one that only safeguards the leader?

Although the quick, silent approach might be necessary in true emergencies, efficiency alone does not ethically justify an action. Failing to include affected stakeholders can erode the trust the organization may need in the future. Although the more open method is generally slower and more unpleasant, it treats colleagues as partners rather than subjects and leaves the institution in a more legitimate position. Ethical leadership usually means choosing the more difficult, slower route because it respects people's right to be informed about decisions that affect their work.

Fourth, value conflicts arising from political, cultural, and economic pressures land on leaders' desks daily. An allegiance to free inquiry

can collide with an adherence to an inclusive climate; fiscal prudence may clash with the aim of expanding access. These conflicts are not necessarily evidence of leadership failure; navigating them is part of leadership's moral substance. Ethical leadership mainly consists of keeping competing or opposing values in tension and making careful choices when it is impossible to satisfy them all at once.

Framing the Book's Central Questions

From these trends, four questions emerge that organize the chapters ahead.

1. **How can leaders deal with conflicting values in complicated situations?** When two goods come into conflict, ethical leadership does not mean finding a hidden solution that satisfies everyone; rather, it means reasoning openly about the values, duties, and consequences involved and being able to justify the decision afterwards. The chapters in Part I offer the moral frameworks of virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism, which enable such reasoning to be thorough rather than merely improvised.
2. **How can leaders establish and maintain trust within various stakeholder groups?** Trust cannot be announced; it must be shown repeatedly by ensuring actions match words. Part II looks at practice, covering student success, access and belonging, governance, financial stewardship, and technology. In each area, trust is earned or lost through specific decisions.
3. **How can leaders ensure that institutions retain their integrity when going through rapid transformation? Since** change is continuous, integrity should remain constant. Adaptive leadership demands both flexibility and a strong moral foundation. Leaders must be able to alter their strategy

without treating their core commitments as something to be discarded.

4. **Finally, what are the necessary conditions for establishing ethical leadership in the future?** Part III focuses on preparing the next generation of leaders, developing ethical organizational cultures, and reclaiming higher education's role as a moral force in society.

Let us temporarily return to the vice president and the donor we started with. By the time you reach the end of this book, you won't be expected to remember the "right" answer to that situation. What is intended is that you will realize the situation for what it is, use a framework to think about it, and act in a manner that you can justify, whatever the outcome once the weekly deadline has come and gone. Ethical leadership is not a fixed quality, or something achieved once and for all. It is a continuous commitment, shaped and developed in a variety of ways through the trials of everyday tasks, meetings, and relationships built over time. This process of ethical leadership benefits not only the leaders themselves but also their colleagues, their institutions, and the communities they serve. The chapters that follow invite you to build that confidence deliberately, one framework, one scenario, and one decision at a time.

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PART I

Theoretical Foundations